

**Washington, D.C.** - Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) and Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois today urged federal regulators to reject a request from Canadian National Railroad (CN) to fast-track an environmental review of its proposed purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E).

On May 13, CN officials asked the Surface Transportation Board (STB), which governs the sale, to complete its Environmental Impact Statement by Dec. 1. As noted in Durbin and Bean's joint letter, that would leave only six months for completion of the study – one third of the minimum 18 months total the STB said is typically required for such a study.

"Any proposal with such a dramatic impact on the future of Illinois must be carefully reviewed," said Durbin. "Rushing this decision will leave important voices out of the process and limit access to information the Surface Transportation Board needs. I will continue to work with Congresswoman Bean and other members of the Illinois delegation to make certain this important decision is not rushed."

Bean, who has led Congressional opposition to the transaction and who represents over 15 communities which will be directly affected, said: "CN's request is a cynical attempt at an end run around the established process. The STB has clearly identified a host of issues that need careful examination. Rushing this review process will shortchange the affected communities and undermine the authority of the STB."

CN's proposal would result in up to a 400 percent increase in rail traffic along the EJ&E line, which cuts through many suburban Chicago communities. The increase will have a significant impact on traffic congestion on the region's roads. CN's proposal also threatens construction of the long-awaited suburb-to-suburb Metra STAR Line. CN also has yet to commit to measures that would allow expanded and more timely Amtrak service along the popular and fast-growing Chicago-Carbondale-Champaign route .

In November 2007, the STB ruled that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was required to study the impact of the sale. In April, the STB issued a ruling on the final scope of the EIS, outlining numerous broad factors that would require review. The STB has also said it would be impossible to put a timeframe on the EIS, ruling, "The time the EIS will take to prepare cannot be determined ahead of time because there is no way to predict in advance all of the specific

issues that may arise. In prior cases, the EIS process has ranged from approximately 18 months to several years.”

Given that the level of public interest in this project has been unprecedented, according to STB officials, Bean and Durbin argue that a shortened review process makes little sense.

“An EIS process that is completed in less than the typical time frame of 18 months to several years, as cited by the Board as an average, would jeopardize the ability of the STB to do the comprehensive investigation warranted and undermine the credibility and authority of the EIS recommendations and proceedings,” Bean and Durbin’s joint letter says.

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